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SUBJECT: AN EER FOR CHAD

REF: A. 08 NDJAMENA 165
[1](#)B. 08 NDJAMENA 200
[1](#)C. NDJAMENA 306
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OVERVIEW

[1](#)1. (SBU) We learned two days ago of President Deby's decision to accept the invitation to lunch with POTUS and other African heads of state during upcoming UNGA meetings. This visit affords Embassy a good opportunity to lay out Chad's record of progress since its nadir of contemporary existence as a state in early 2008. The death, destruction, and disruption caused by 2008 rebel attacks, which nearly toppled the Chadian regime, left the country militarily, politically, economically and diplomatically prostrate. In the months following the attacks, Chad has recovered to a noteworthy degree, due largely to the government's willingness to follow the advice of its friends, including the USG. At the behest of the international community, and because it had few other promising alternatives, the Chadian government has taken steps to end its diplomatic isolation and promote national reconciliation, political reform, socio-economic development, and strategic security.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Chad's efforts have not been uniformly successful, nor are any of Chad's diplomatic partners giving the Deby regime "straight As" on its performance in the past 18 months. But there has been significant progress in key areas, and the GOC under Deby's key collaborators -- PM Youssouf Saleh Abbas and FORMIN Moussa Faki Mahamat, among others -- has proceeded in ways that the USG has proposed and recommended.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The USG should seek to promote continued GOC progress along the paths traveled since February 2008. Increasing USG leverage in Chad will reinforce commitment to positive steps already taken. Our continued involvement with the GOC is essential to achieving strategic U.S. goals in the region, starting with resolution of the Darfur crisis and return of Sudanese refugees to their homes.

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION

¶4. (SBU) Chad's current government is headed by Prime Minister Youssouf Saleh Abbas, who hails from the eastern town of Abeche. Abbas's selection by President Deby in April 2008 marked a departure from the traditional choice of a southern Chadian for this slot, and likely represented the President's desire to reach out to Chadians in regions that are host to Sudanese refugees and rebel movements (Ref A). In part in response to international, including USG, pressure, the Abbas cabinet was "opened" to the political opposition, with four senior opposition leaders named to significant ministries -- Defense, Justice, Agriculture, and Urban Planning (Ref B).

¶5. (SBU) In the 19 months since the rebel attacks, "intra-Chadian diplomacy" and national reconciliation has had a revival. Abderamane Moussa, the National Mediator and close advisor of President Deby, has been helping to woo rebels and exiles home. Hundreds of rebels have returned to Chad, with rebel leader Ahmat Hassaballah Soubiane (Ref C) the most prominent. Former President Goukouni Oueddei has also returned to support the GOC in its "reconciliation with rebels" (Ref D).

GOOD GOVERNANCE

¶6. (SBU) The President has given the Prime Minister wider latitude than his predecessors to run the government, although Deby continues to oversee the "Presidential" portfolios of foreign affairs and defense. PM Abbas, a former opposition figure long closely associated with former President Goukouni Oueddei and rebel leader Youssouf Togoimi, came to power with a program calling for "national reconciliation," political reform, and improved governance, including anti-corruption and anti-impunity for wrong-doers, as well as better relations with IFIs. Abbas has had considerable success in some areas and less in others. Still, the PM's authority is limited (and those of his ally, the Finance Minister, bounded) by Infrastructure Minister Younousmi's Presidentially-approved prerogative on public spending and lack of enthusiasm on Younousmi's part for better relations with IFIs.

¶7. (SBU) The GOC responded to opposition party and international pressure by participating in an ad hoc Commission of Inquiry that investigated the events surrounding the rebel near-takeover of the capital last year. The GOC continues to pursue legal investigations pursuant to the findings of the Commission into abuses committed at that time (although no facts have come to light about the disappearance of prominent opposition leader Ibni Oumar).

¶8. (SBU) The GOC, again with considerable pressure from donors and the international community, has re-launched the moribund political reform process agreed to on August 13, 2007 by members of the Government, the ruling party coalition, and opposition. An Electoral Reform Committee created to implement the August 13 process has been able to formulate draft laws and other measures aimed at facilitating credible legislative and communal (local) elections in 2010, and credible presidential polling in 2011. The National Assembly has passed, and the GOC adopted, a new electoral code and laws providing for necessary censuses (mapping, demographic, and "electoral") and for an Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI). The CENI was formed and began work in July 2009.

NATIONAL DEFENSE
AND EVERYDAY ENVIRONMENT

¶9. (SBU) Following the 2008 rebel attacks on N'Djamena, the government invested heavily in national security and military equipment. The government decisively defeated subsequent

rebel attempts to advance, most recently in May 2009. Still, security and law enforcement are some of the more troubled sectors in Chadian society, particularly with respect to their understanding of human rights standards. State control is weak down the chain of command and away from the capital. Soldiers sometimes act with impunity and have been implicated in a number of human rights cases. The GOC has begun to tackle one aspect of the problem, child soldiers, by launching awareness campaigns and reviewing troops to try to identify under-aged fighters. It has also handed hundreds of child soldiers captured from rebel ranks to the international community (Ref E).

¶10. (SBU) The GOC has invested time and effort in reinforcing internal security, including at the local and community levels. It has carried out major national campaigns to seize illegal weapons and to determine who of many uniformed individuals are actually members of the national army.

¶11. (SBU) In the environmental realm, Abbas has undertaken a comprehensive effort to address increasing desertification in Chad, especially around N'Djamena. The GOC has banned charcoal as cooking fuel, in part to end the practice of felling live trees, and started a tree-planting campaign.

¶12. (SBU) While print and electronic media outlets continue to grow in number, the majority of Chadians, especially outside the capital, receive news from the radio, as well as from community, tribal and religious leaders. Ordinance Five, which limited press freedoms after the February 2008 attacks, is still on the books, but "independent media" delight in skewering government and other well-known figures, and anti-corruption is the most favored journalistic theme.

RESPONSIBLE REVENUE MANAGEMENT
AND DEVELOPMENT

¶13. (SBU) In the past 18 months, the GOC has made progress in normalizing relationships with international financial institutions. The government has restored its links with the World Bank, met requirements for a preliminary program with the IMF, and is seeking to reestablish ties with the European Investment Bank. In an effort to clean up government payrolls, in mid-2009 the Ministry of Finance started bancarizing government employees' salaries.

¶14. (SBU) The GOC won IMF backing in April 2009 for a six-month IMF Staff-Monitored Program, as a result of an agreement to revise the 2009 national budget to account for decreased revenue in the wake of reduced world oil prices. The budget revision was a serious first step by the government to improve management of public finances. With IMF endorsement, the EU has offered Chad significant financial support and technical assistance in this area. The IMF's first SMP review is under way as of this writing; GOC officials have admitted that they have missed some mid-program targets, but we await the IMF's formal assessment before declaring Chad's progress to be inadequate.

¶15. (SBU) As part of its budget revision process, the GOC is specifically aiming to improve management of infrastructure spending. Lack of predictable electricity availability and rising costs of living pose problems, but the GOC is endeavoring to use oil revenue for development around the country, including to build roads, schools, and health clinics.

DIPLOMACY

¶16. (SBU) The government continues to exercise diplomatic skill in carrying out responsibilities under the accords it has signed, including with respect to fair treatment for returning rebels from Sudan and normalizing relations with

Sudan itself. The GOC remains committed to fulfilling its obligations under the Dakar Accord (aimed at normalizing Chad-Sudan relations) and has been waiting since last year for Khartoum to take a turn housing the Contact Group. (Chad hosted in November 2008.) The Dakar Accord calls for international monitoring of the Chad-Sudan border, a concept the that GOC has pursued with SE Gration, with Libyan interlocutors, and with MINURCAT officials, among others.

¶17. (SBU) The GOC demurred at joining new mediation efforts following the May 2008 rebels attacks, instead emphasizing its commitment to the Sirte Accord process, which lays out terms for return of Chadian rebels to their homeland. President Deby and other senior GOC officials have publicly welcomed returning rebels and made clear the government's desire to integrate returnees into la vie tchadienne. Rebels feel so welcome that they often return with outrageous demands for ministerial or flag-rank military positions, which they sometimes obtain as Chad attempts to demonstrate that it will not discriminate against them (Ref F).

¶18. (SBU) The GOC views itself as a necessary element in the Darfur peace equation, and has attempted to exert a positive influence on international peace initiatives. President Deby has hosted SE Gration during both of the latter's visits to Chad, and has made personal efforts to rein in the JEM's Khalil Ibrahim.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE
AND PEACEKEEPING

¶19. (SBU) This is quite a bright spot for the GOC, which has performed well in cooperating with massive international humanitarian efforts in eastern and southern Chad, especially the former, where 300,000 Darfur refugees and 200,000 Chadian IDPs receive assistance worth \$250 million per year. Overall, we and our PRM colleagues would give the GOC a 6.5 or 7.0 on a scale of one to ten in these areas. The GOC is generally responsive to international norms regarding refugees. No egregious errors regarding responsibilities as a host nation have occurred. We think that lack of capacity rather than lack of political will, and unintentional negligence rather than malfeasance, explain why Chad does not deserve better marks in this area. The GOC has continued to make major efforts to deal constructively with two separate UNSC-authorized PKOs, the temporary EUFOR until mid-2008, and its UN partner and successor, the longer-lasting MINURCAT since then. The government remains welcoming to all UN agencies as well as to the UN peace-keeping operation, and to the range of international NGOs that operate here. Indeed, Chadian leaders and citizens view the UN and other international players as important partners not only in terms of managing Darfur refugees but also on the democratization and development fronts.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

¶20. (SBU) Chad's deficiencies are well known to international statisticians. The nation ranks second to last on the Economist Intelligence Unit's Democracy Index. It ranks ninth from last on the UNDP's development index of 179 countries. It ranks second to last among African states on the Ibrahim Index of African Governance. It ranks seventh from last on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. It is the world's fourth-most failed state on the Fund for Peace Index. Against this backdrop, Chad's generosity to refugee populations and good relations with the international community based here to assist with the Darfur crisis deserve recognition and thanks. That President Deby's authoritarian tendencies may be moderating slightly is one possible interpretation that could be brought to bear to explain the government's restraint in pursuing retribution against rebel who engaged in attacks in May of this year. We would like to think that the GOC will honor its commitments

to greater political opening and to including opposition voices in public debate in the months ahead.

¶21. (U) Minimize considered.
BREMNER